

Good Morning,
I have included here some written testimony for the HGO Committee.
I apologize for the format not being as friendly as it could but because of technical issues this is the only way I could get it to you.
Thank you for your attention.

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Rosemary Morse, Berlin Town Clerk January 19,
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My name is Rosemary Morse. I am and have been the elected Town Clerk in Berlin for almost 19 years. In that time I have presided over numerous elections. Vermont has had a history of very good and fair elections. I for one want to see that continue as I'm sure you all do. We all want to keep Vermonters as safe as possible during this COVID pandemic. My own son was positive for COVID and I have an 89 year old mom I want to keep safe. So I get it that we need to do everything we can for voter safety.

I don't believe that mailing a ballot to every legal voter in November achieved that. All it did was cause horrendous waste of time and money. It's appalling when you think of all the ballots mailed that ended up in the trash. Sure the voter numbers were very large in November, but given the atmosphere of that election, common sense tells us there would have been very high numbers anyway. Presidential

elections, historically, always have higher turnouts in Vermont.

Vermont's traditional way of absentee voting achieves the goal of keeping folks safe during this pandemic as well as get ballots to those that truly care enough and want to exercise their right to vote.

Now the Towns are having to deal with a big consequence of that mass mailing as it pertains to our school ballots. You, the legislature, just voted to give Towns the choice of whether or not to mass mail their ballots. Well that option, for all intents and purposes, has been taken away by the Secretary of State, from any Town that is a member of a Unified School District, votes their budget and elects their Board by Australian ballot on the same day that they hold their Town Meeting elections.

For 48 years Berlin was part of a 5 member Union School District. The District Clerk prepared a uniform U-32 ballot as we called it, and got that ballot to the 5 Town Clerks. All 5 Towns used the same uniform school ballot on Town Meeting day. The school ballot was included with the Town Meeting ballot and sent to absentee voters. At the close of the polls the Boards of Civil Authority in each Town would count the ballots to be sure the number of ballots was correct and then those ballots went to a central site for co-mingling and counting by the District Clerk. I think this is probably the same way it was in all Union School Districts that co-mingled ballots.

Then Act 46 came along and Berlin, along with the other 4 Towns, became the Washington Central Unified Union School District. The new District voted to elect it's Board and vote it's budget by Australian ballot. So for the last 2 years the District Clerk has done the same as she did for the previous 48 years. She prepared a uniform ballot, got it to the Towns for voting in the individual Towns, and then has overseen the co-mingling and counting of those ballots. There has been nothing for 2 years, from the Secretary of State, that has indicated that the way voters got their ballot had to be uniform or that our District and many others I'm sure, were not running a uniform election.

Now we come to this year. This will be the third budget and Board election vote. We are now, all of a sudden, being told by the Secretary of State, that because uniformity must be met, we all must not only use the same uniform ballot, but get the ballots to the voter in a uniform way. I took the time over this past weekend to re-read Act 46, the Education State Statutes, and my own School District's Articles of Agreement, and unless I am missing something, found nothing addressing how the voter physically gets a ballot in a School District Election. I only found information regarding the preparation, co-mingling, and the counting of the ballots.

Following the law just passed by the Legislature, as of last Friday, 2 of the Towns in my District had decided to mail to all of their voters, 1 had not yet made a

decision, Berlin and the 5th Town had decided to send postcards for absentee requests. We are now being told that we all have to do absentee mailing the same way for the school ballots, and since 2 are mailing to every voter, then we all will have to. This effectively, takes away the choice you gave to the Towns. What Town, that doesn't want to do a mailing for their Town Meeting ballot, won't change their mind and send them along with the school ballot because how could a Town justify the expense of 2 mailings? Another thought is what does it do to the Towns in a given District that want to or have already chosen to move their Town Meeting? Will the others be forced to change or do 2 mailings? If in fact, even 1 Town in a Unified School District chooses to mail their ballots to every voter, it forces every Town in that Unified District to mail, then there is now NO choice. This is a consequence of the November mailing and the fear of COVID and is a problem that needs to be addressed by Legislature and the State Board of Education, as soon as possible, because it effects a very large number of Towns in Vermont with only a short time before ballots will need to be available for Town Meeting. I would like to be sure that the Secretary of State believes this is a way to keep voters safe and not his way of making it another step on the road to a permanent all mail voting in Vermont.

In closing, I think the old saying (pardon the grammar) "If it ain't broke, don't fix it", applies here. Vermont's elections, with the laws we have had in effect prior to

COVID, have served us all very, very well. I truly believe past elections have been run fairly and outcomes have been accurate. Our absentee voting process allows for everyone that wants to vote, to vote. Mail in voting doesn't change what we already have except for causing more expense to our taxpayers and more trash in our landfills, since, unfortunately, there are many legal voters that don't care enough to vote. With no safeguards against fraud in place in Vermont, with the probability of no money to cover the expense after COVID, and especially already having a current system that works very well, mail in voting should not become law in Vermont.

Thank you for your time and attention.